



The Reform of Shaun



ALLEN FRENCH





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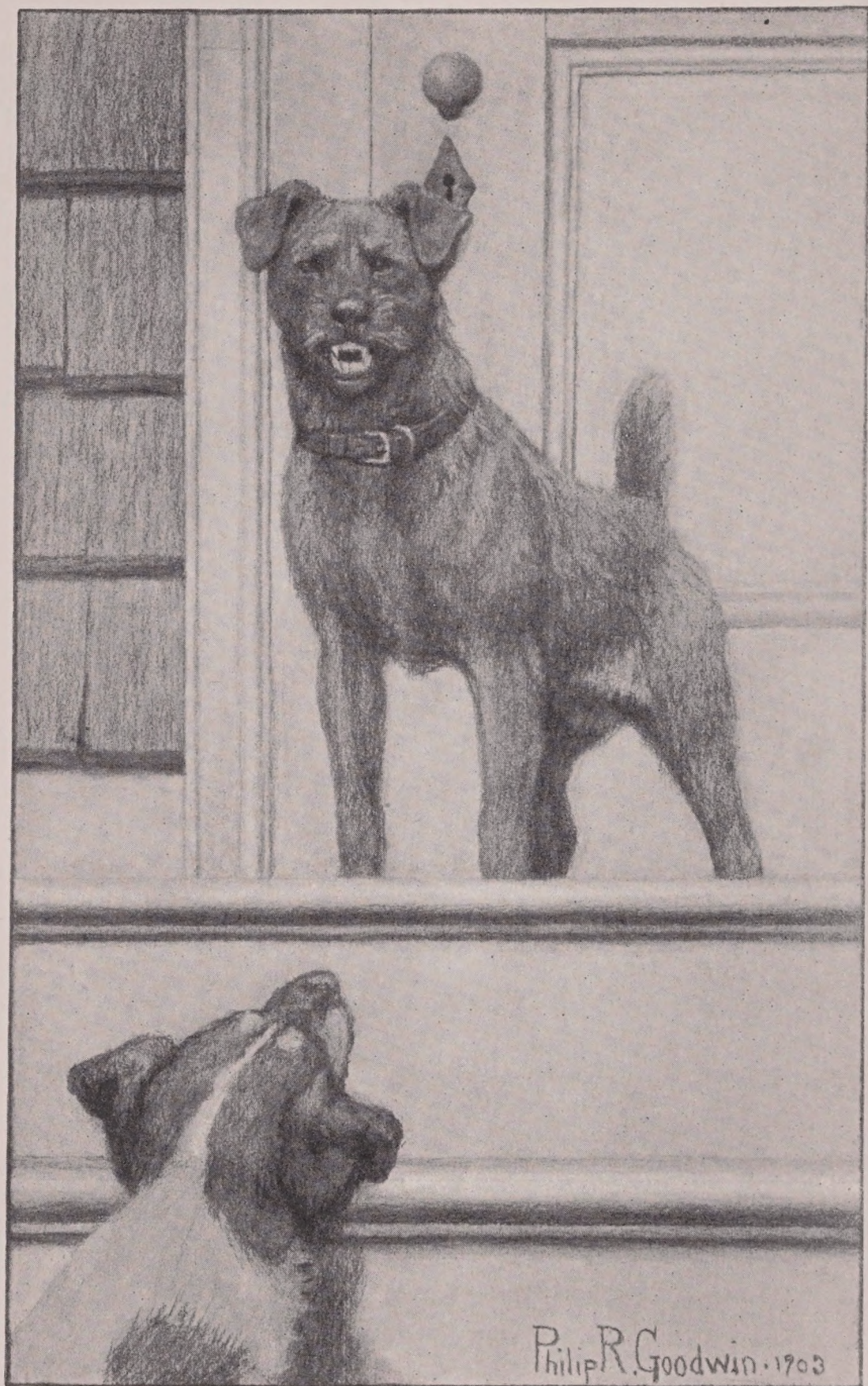
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The Reform of Shaun



Philip R. Goodwin • 1903

The
Reform of Shaun

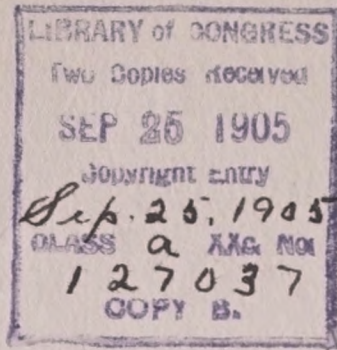
By
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"The Junior Cup," etc.

Illustrated by Philip R. Goodwin



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I

WITHIN the kennel yard were a dozen dogs — that is, they were within but for their noses, which were thrust through the pickets. Without, old Jim Weaver, the dog fancier, talked with a patron. The gentleman's dog strained at his leash and rubbed familiarly against Brian, who sat at Jim's feet, — old Brian Boru, the ancestor, in some degree, of every dog there. But Brian held aloof and listened to the conversation.

The other dogs also listened, even the three-months pups, who were just learning their English. And heedless

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Shaun, after his month in the world as eager to put on airs as a boy just from college, got no attention at all.

“You guaranteed him satisfactory, Jim,” the gentleman was saying.

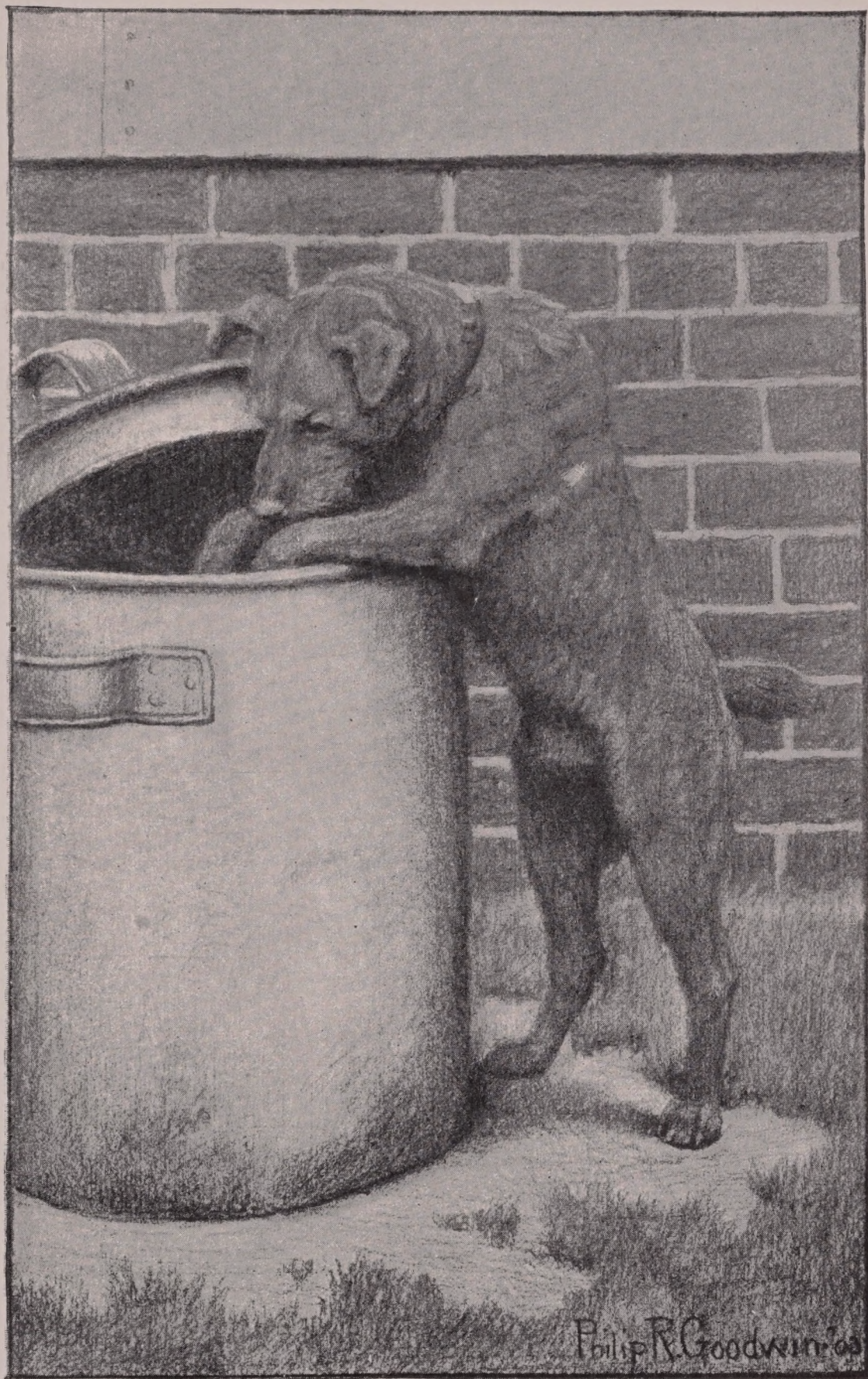
“Yes, Mr. Davis, so I did,” returned the breeder. “Of course I’ll take him back, or I’ll exchange him for another.”

“You have another?” asked Mr. Davis.

“Same litter. Well, I’m disappointed in Shaun. I took much pains with him.”

“Utterly unmanageable, Jim. He ran with all the curs in the town, ate himself sick with the food he found in the street, and would stay for hours away from the house.”

Jim reached down, detached the gentleman’s leash from Shaun’s collar, and snapped on his own. Shaun took



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the opportunity to rub closer to Brian, but Brian moved away and sat down on his haunches, still listening closely.

“Will you have the other dog now, sir?” asked Jim.

“No. In a few days my wife and I go away for a visit, and we can’t have a dog with us that we’re not used to. In two weeks I’ll take him, Jim. Meanwhile won’t you take the new one into the house and train him a little?”

“I will, sir.”

Mr. Davis stooped and patted Shaun. “Good-bye, old fellow,” he said. Shaun paid no attention. His master pulled the dog to him, took his head in both his hands, and looked into the brown eyes. “Shaun,” he said, “I did my best with you.” But the dog began to tug and twitch to get away.

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Mr. Davis rose. "You see, Jim, he pays no attention. He does n't care."

"I see, sir. He's no dog for you."

Mr. Davis turned away, and Shaun, piqued at the inattention of the others, started to follow. But the leash held him up, and he saw his master walking steadily away. He uttered a yelp.

Mr. Davis stopped and looked back. "No, Shaun," he said sadly. "I gave you every chance." He disappeared out of the dog's sight.

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II

JIM opened the gate to the kennel yard, but none of the dogs came running out, not even the puppies. They stood near the opening in a close-wedged mass and looked at Shaun. None of the stumpy tails were wagging, none of the shiny teeth were bared in welcome. Each stocky Irish terrier stood and glowered, and Shaun, for the first time in his boisterous life, felt ill at ease. He hung back as Jim pulled him toward the gate.

“You see,” said Jim, “they understand you. Larry, come out.”

Shaun's own twin trotted past him and took no notice of him. Jim thrust Shaun in among the others, took off his leash, and was about to close the

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gate. Then he paused. "Brian!" he said to the old dog.

Master and dog looked at each other knowingly. Brian's stump-tail slowly moved. "Go in there for a few days," said Jim. "See if you can't teach him something." Brian walked in after Shaun, and the gate was shut behind him.

The other dogs crowded close beside Brian, following him to the back of the yard. Larry went with Jim into the house. Shaun, companionless, pressed up against the pickets and gazed at the corner around which his master had gone. Mr. Davis was in the bright and beautiful world; Shaun was in the dingy kennel once more. But his master did not return, and Shaun at last, with a toss of the head, turned to the others.

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An unnatural quiet was over them. None of the puppies were playing; they were sitting in a row. Some of the older dogs had curled up as if to sleep, but at his movement Shaun saw the wary eyes open, then slowly close again. Old Brian, his one-time tawny muzzle now nearly silver, sat calmly and took no notice of his descendant. But Shaun wandered up to him.

“ Brian,” he asked, beginning to feel a curious homelessness, “ Brian, has my master left me ? ”

“ Your master ? ” said Brian. “ You don’t deserve a master, or a home.”

“ Huh ! ” said Shaun. Brian was his great-great-grandfather, the idol and the model of the kennels, upon whose precepts Shaun himself had been brought up. But Shaun’s respect for Brian, in fact his respect for anything,

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had been much lessened by his stay in the great world.

Shaun went to Nip, the next oldest there. "Nip," he said, "how de do?"

But Nip was cross, always cross. "Get out," he said, "you silly swaggerer!"

Now Shaun had learned to pride himself on his self-possession. "Oh," he said jauntily, "glad to find you feeling so well, Nip." He passed on to another dog.

But this time he got no answer at all, and as he went still further he was studiously neglected. The dogs were asleep, or appeared to be, curled up tight. But Shaun believed they were pretending. Next he went to the puppies, who sat unsteadily together. "Hullo, youngsters," he said to them, "how you've grown!"

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The puppies snickered, but none made any other response. It seemed as if they giggled meaningly ; then by a common impulse they broke away, and by twos and threes scampered off, laughing together.

It was irritating. More than that, it was depressing, for where was Mr. Davis ? Was he really not coming back ? And would none of the dogs speak pleasantly ? Perhaps Mr. Davis had said something unkind there at the gate. Shaun wished he had listened. He walked along the row of sleeping dogs ; none moved to make advances to him. Nip was awake still, but surly and bristling. Brian, after his contemptuous remark, sat like a statue. Again Shaun felt that curious homesickness.

He went back to the gate and sat

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down. Why did not Mr. Davis return? Homesickness increased. It began to press upon him. Shaun could not help it—after a while he whimpered. He was not so very old. He looked around at the older dogs; none paid attention. He raised his muzzle and whimpered louder. Then the barriers broke, and he lifted his voice in a full-drawn howl. “Oh,” cried poor Shaun, “nobody loves me!” His quivering nose pointed toward the cruel heavens.

III

AFTER a while Shaun became conscious that Brian had changed position — was, in fact, coming towards him. He kept on howling. Brian sat down by his side. Gradually Shaun became silent. There was a pause. Shaun did not look at Brian, but he knew that Brian was looking at him.

“Tell me,” said Brian, finally, “why should any one love you?”

“Why — why —” stammered Shaun.

“What have you done,” asked Brian, “to earn any one’s love?”

“Oh,” cried Shaun in despair, “I wish I were with Horton’s Snap! He would treat me kindly.”

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“ Well, then,” asked Brian, patiently, “ who is Horton’s Snap ? ”

“ Horton,” said Shaun, “ is the butcher in our town. Mr. Davis’s town, I mean. Snap is his dog.”

“ What kind of a dog ? ”

“ Why, a fox terrier, with a bushy tail.”

There was a perceptible snicker from behind, but Shaun, quickly as he looked, could not tell from which dog it came.

“ A fox terrier with a bushy tail ? ” asked Brian, coldly. “ What did he do ? ”

“ Oh, just nothing,” said Shaun, glad of a chance to talk of his world. “ But he knew where there were such nice things to eat ! ”

“ With what other dogs did you go about ? ” pursued Brian, deliberately.

“ Why,” said Shaun, “ there was Jack

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Rogers. He was a setter. And Mopsy Frost ; he was a pug."

"Fond of eating?" asked Brian.

"Oh," cried Shaun, enthusiastically, "there was always such a fine pailful at his back door."

"Any other dogs?" inquired Brian.

"Well, I don't know," and Shaun thought. "I don't count the Waltons' Max. He was rather too fond of going with his master."

"A thing you seldom did, I suppose?"

"Why, Brian," whined Shaun, suddenly seeing where all this tended, "Mr. and Mrs. Davis would go sometimes and call on friends, and expect me to wait outside. And it's still chilly nowadays."

"It is cold work sitting on doorsteps," commented Brian.

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Shaun was encouraged. "Yes," he said eagerly, "and what do you get for it? I saw Trip Waters once, waiting for his mistress, and shivering. He would n't come with me and play, or get some food."

"I wonder why," said Brian, as if to himself.

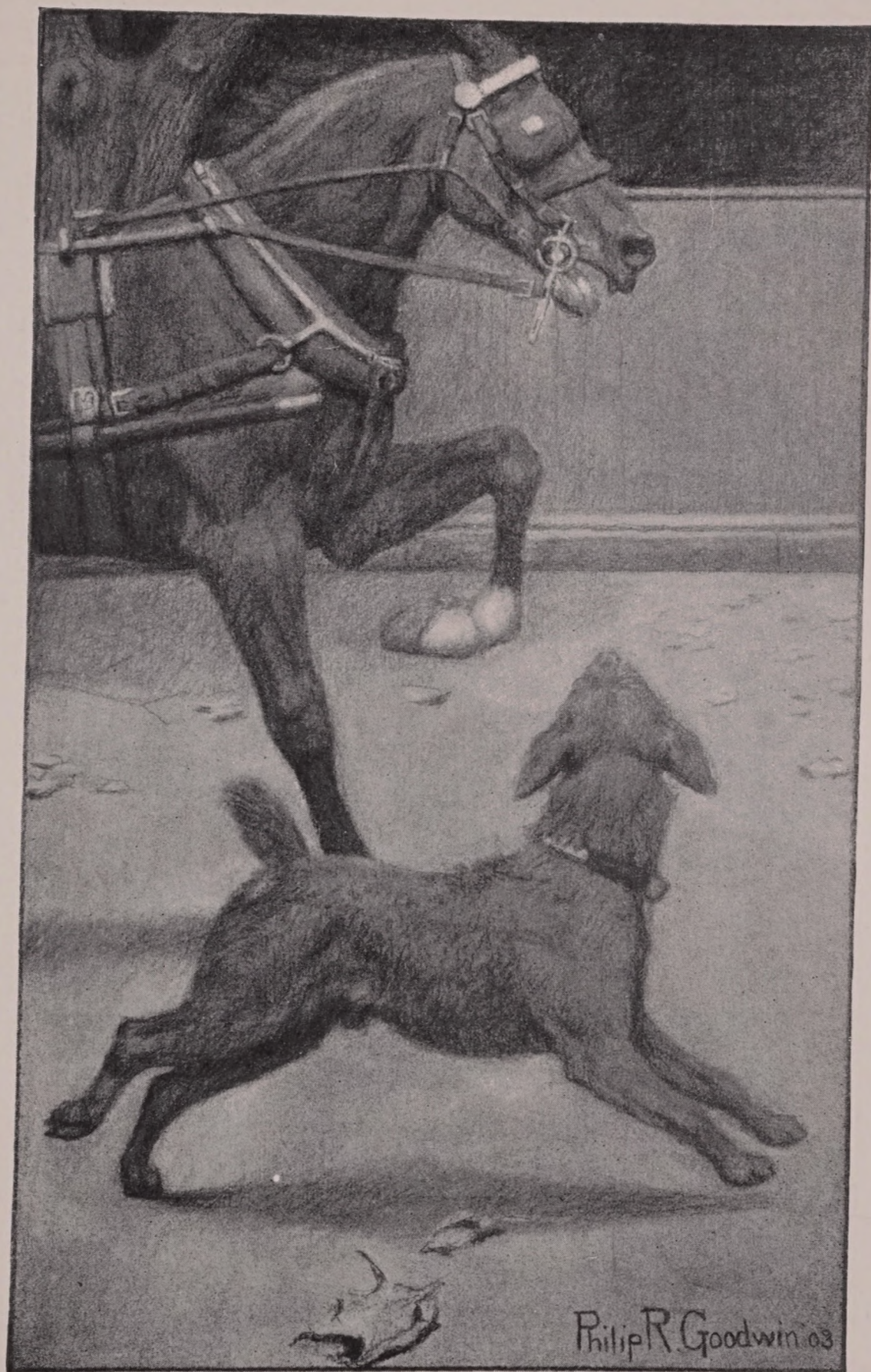
"Oh," explained Shaun, "he had the old idea that a dog should n't take food except from his master."

"Is that idea out of date?" asked Brian. "I was brought up on it."

"Why, what's the use of it?" cried Shaun. "In our town there's plenty to eat, and so a fellow helps himself. You can't expect anything else."

"I should n't think it very clean," remarked Brian, critically.

"Well, clean enough," said Shaun.



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“And you don’t seem in such good trim as when you left.”

Shaun made no answer; he allowed his mind to wander. But the thought of his friends was presently too much for him, and he broke out again. “It’s been such fun!” he said. “Do you ever bark at horses?”

“I?” asked Brian, in surprise.

“Well, of course you have to be pretty limber,” went on Shaun. “Snap Horton showed me, but I can do it now as well as he. I almost made a horse run away once. And everybody gets so mad!”

“Your master, too?”

“He hated it,” admitted Shaun, guilelessly. “He’d catch me if he could, and tie me up. But it’s such fun!”

“Never struck you as being a little undignified?”

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“Why,” said Shaun. “No — I — That is, not exactly.”

“And how were you treated in the house?” asked Brian.

“Why, pretty well, I must say. I had my own basket and a cushion. My mistress was kind to me — is n’t it nice when a woman pats you? But she was particular, you know, just like Mr. Davis. She used to wash me once a week, and would make me eat my food on a cloth. Why should people object to crumbs? And then they never let me go into the dining-room. And she did n’t like to have me bark at people that passed the house. You see, they kept me pretty close.”

“Of course you barked just the same?”

“Of course,” said Shaun.

“And did n’t take pains about the crumbs?”

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“Why — no.”

“And slipped away whenever you could to join your fine friends?”

“You talk,” answered Shaun, impatiently, “like Cæsar White.”

“It’s a pity you did n’t listen more to him. But who is he?”

“Well,” said Shaun, this time triumphantly, “you may sneer at the misfortune of Snap Horton’s birth, but Cæsar White is no better. He is mixed mastiff and bull.”

Brian was not moved. “Very well,” he said. “Birth is not everything. I have seen some pretty poor specimens come out of the best kennels (Shaun winced). You are young, Shaun, and have not yet learned that dogs should be measured by merit. What did Cæsar White do?”

Shaun was still argumentative. “You

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can't get me there," he cried, "either. He ran with a cart!" His contempt was deep.

"Oh, Shaun," said Brian, "I thought you had learned these things. Tell me, is there any disgrace in minding your master's business? To run with a cart and guard it — for a horse cannot do that — is honorable."

Shaun's assurance vanished, and Brian waited a moment for the reproof to take effect. Then he asked: "And Mr. Davis, was he kind?"

"Well," said Shaun, "I thought he was at first. But after I made friends with Snap Horton, Mr. Davis used to punish me for the things I did, — barking, you know, and eating, and coming home late. And Snap said, you know, he was a pretty hard master. He never let any of his dogs run loose."

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“No,” said Brian, “so your father said.”

Shaun faltered. “Did my father know Mr. Davis?”

Brian looked at Shaun with indignation. “You don’t remember much that is said to you, do you? Your father was Mr. Davis’s own dog. Have you forgotten that Mr. Davis took you because he was so fond of your father? Why, I told you twenty times never to disgrace your family. In that town of all others, and with such a master!”

Shaun felt a sudden sinking. “I — I forgot,” he said.

“Your father,” went on Brian, “used to come here sometimes for a week in the summer, when his master and mistress went yachting. Your father,” said Brian, “was a *dog*.” It was as if Brian had said: “He was a *man*.”

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“Jim has his picture in the house. Gillie was the best dog that ever went out of Jim’s hands. Better than me. There’s not a pup in the yard that can’t tell you all about him. And you forgot!”

Shaun held his head low.

“I remember,” said Brian, “when the news came of his death. I was in the yard that day looking after your mother. Jim came to the fence and looked down on us all. The moment I saw him I knew that something was wrong, and when he said, ‘Gillie’s dead!’ there wasn’t one of us that didn’t drop his tail. You were born the next day.

“And you say,” pursued Brian, grimly, “that Mr. Davis was a hard master. I know all about Mr. Davis. Your father said: ‘A kinder master one couldn’t have. It was a pleasure to

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obey him.' A hard master? Shaun, he came here one day, and sat down there in the house, and called me to him. 'Brian,' he said, 'Gillie's dead! Old dog, my heart is sore. Where shall I get such another?' And Shaun, there were tears in his eyes. Don't you know we picked you out for him?"

Shaun shivered all up and down his spine, but his back was now turned and he said nothing.

"One of Gillie's pups was to go to Mr. Davis," went on Brian. "We heard Jim saying so. We picked you out for him, your mother and I; we trained you up for him. Jim saw it, and so he took the mother's choice, as he always does. And now — Larry's a good dog, but he's the last of the litter."

"What do you mean?" cried Shaun.

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“Isn’t Mr. Davis coming back for me?”

“For Larry.”

“And I — and I —” gasped Shaun.

Brian answered solemnly, “You will stay here the rest of your life. Jim never lets a dog go out twice.”

Shaun screamed with sudden fright.

IV

WHAT human beings express by weeping and wailing and wringing of hands, Shaun showed in his own way for many hours. He yelped, he barked, he howled ; he ran up and down beside the pickets ; he scratched at the gate. At midnight his distress was not less. Old Jim got out of his bed and looked in the moonlight at the piteous form. "He takes it pretty hard," he said, and he patted Larry before he lay down again.

Near daylight Shaun, exhausted, slept. But his dreams were bad, and he twitched and whimpered in his sleep. The other dogs looked at him soberly, as one by one they awoke ; the puppies got many a lesson that morning.

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Jim came and fed the dogs, and at the noise Shaun awoke. But he made no movement to join them, and Brian at last came and sat down by him.

“Well,” he said cheerfully, “I’ve some breakfast saved for you.”

“I think,” said Shaun, “I don’t want any.”

“Prefer something fresh from the gutter?”

“Brian!” cried Shaun, unhappily.

Brian couched and lay thinking. “Your father —” he said after a while. Shaun’s ears dropped, and he turned his head away.

“Your father,” said Brian, without relenting, “used to speak so fondly of his home. He used to thank me,” and the old dog’s voice trembled a little, “for the training I gave him. He used to repeat to the puppies all the max-

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ims: ‘Obedience is a dog’s virtue,’ ‘One dog can annoy a whole neighborhood,’ ‘A good home is more than everything,’ and then again, ‘Whatever comes of it, obey.’ He used to say a good many things may not seem to pay — waiting at doors, not eating, not barking, coming when you’re called. But they do pay, just the same, when you find your master loves you. Mr. Davis, Shaun —”

“Don’t!” cried Shaun.

“Mr. Davis cared. He said, when he left you yesterday, that he’d done his best with you. If you had noticed, you’d have seen how much he cared.”

“Don’t! don’t!” cried Shaun.

“And now,” went on Brian, “you’ll grow to be just like Nip here, fat and cross, and somewhat stupid. A gentle-

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man tried him once and could n't keep him."

"Don't!" cried Shaun. "Don't! oh, don't! It kills me. Oh, how could I forget?"

And Jim, again looking out of the window, said, "There's Shaun at it once more." He lifted Larry up to look.

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V

IT was the second morning. Shaun's second night had been quieter ; for he went to sleep before midnight. But again he refused his breakfast.

"You need n't talk to me any more about it all," he said to Brian, when the old dog came and sat by him again. "I think I understand now."

"Have I been unkind ?" asked Brian.

"You had to be, I suppose. None of the other dogs have taken any notice of me since I came."

That was according to Brian's orders. And yet, thought the old dog, what was the use ? Shaun's life was spoiled. He would have no chance to show his repentance.

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Suddenly Shaun jumped up. "Brian, Jim has left the gate open !"

"Well," said Brian, calmly, "none of the puppies will run away."

Shaun grew excited. "*I* will run away !"

"Why —" said Brian, "I —" He hesitated between duty to his master and affection for a favorite grandchild ; but Shaun waited for no permission. He slipped out the gate.

"I must go," he said. "Good-bye." He dared not wait, but began at once to move away. Brian called out to him one direction before he disappeared, — "Inquire of other dogs." Then Shaun was gone.

Once in the street he was like a chip upon the sea. Strange dogs ran at him and growled. He avoided them only to meet others. This was no time to

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fight ; besides, no dog has a right to fight except upon his own ground. Shaun was weak with thirty-six hours of unhappiness, and from lack of food. How glad he was when he saw a dog that ran with a cart !

“ Please,” he said, “ oh, please — which way to Concord ? ”

The dog with the cart trotted on, minding his master’s business ; but he responded.

“ Go on to the watering-trough,” he said, “ then first left, and straight on for miles and miles.”

Shaun obeyed. He found the long turnpike and followed it. First there were houses ; they grew less in number, and he ran between fields, then between tall trees. Then were fields again, then more houses, then another town. A dog ran out at

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him. "How far to Concord?" asked Shaun.

"Woof! Who are you? Woof, woof!"

Another dog ran up, and then another. Shaun gave them the slip and passed through the town's centre, where other dogs came yelping. Lonely, afraid, he ran as for his life, but a recollection came to him. "This," he said bitterly, "is what I used to do with Horton's Snap."

He passed through the town, then through the long vacant space where no one lived, then through another town, and another, and another. No Concord yet, but in every place he was followed by yelling mongrels. Another town, but not his own, and still the straight road led on. Then at last—surely that house was familiar, and that

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tree! Here was his own town — his own street — his own house, with Mr. and Mrs. Davis standing at the door. He crawled to them, pleading, on his wretched little belly. “Shaun!” they cried, and stood speechless.

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VI

“**A**ND so,” said Brian, on the next day, “they’ve brought you back again.”

Shaun’s disappointment was too deep for expression. Brian could get nothing from him — nothing but moans, and tears from the brown eyes. It seemed as if Shaun were heartbroken. “He’ll die of it,” said Brian, and old Jim said the same. A day, two days passed, and Shaun began to get thin. Jim bathed him, combed him, brushed him. He brought him the best of food; Shaun would not touch it. “He’ll die, surely,” said Jim.

Brian came to him again and again. Shaun sighed, moaned, and could not respond. But at last, by long per-

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severance, Brian made Shaun talk. "Oh," said the poor creature, "if they had only tried me! I should have been so good! But my mistress cried when I cried; sometimes I think of that, and it comforts me — a little. If I could only see her again!"

Brian was moved. "It must have cost her something to send you away, even at first," he asserted.

Tears trickled down Shaun's nose. "I know it now," he said. "I remember now how she kissed me good-bye the first time. And this time, just as we were going away, and she was crying, 'Oh,' she said to Mr. Davis, 'don't let him come back again. I could n't bear to part with him a third time.'"

"Then go again!" cried Brian.

"Jim will never let me out," said

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Shaun, sadly. "I heard him promise Mr. Davis."

"But I can get you out!"

Shaun started up. "What — now?" he demanded.

"This night," said Brian. "Eat, Shaun — eat and gather strength."

That night's moon saw a strange sight. One after another the terriers relieved each other, digging a hole under the pickets. Shaun lay and waited, trembling with hope, while Brian directed the work. When the hole was deep enough, Shaun squeezed through.

"Good-bye, all," he said. "Good-bye, Brian. You've been kinder to me than I deserve."

The two rubbed noses through the bars. "Good-bye," said Brian. "Good-bye," said all the others. "Good luck this time, Shaun."

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That was a long run in the pale moonlight. The road stretched onward like a silver ribbon, bordered by threatening shadows. Among the woods the darkness seemed full of dangers; in the towns Shaun feared the barking curs. But no wild beasts came from under the trees, and as he passed through the sleeping towns no one ran at him. At the farms he saw dogs, but they were watch-dogs, vigilant but silent, who let him pass. "They," thought Shaun, "are like the dogs that run with carts." And as the day broke he reached his own town and his own house. Thankful, humble, afraid of what might happen, he sat at the door and waited for the family to awake.

But while the town stirred into life, and carts began to pass and repass, no

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sound came from within the house. The milkman went by without stopping, and Shaun, wondering, became uneasy. Still he did not dare to bark. He waited longer, till the sun stood high and he could no more contain himself. Then he cried for admittance.

The neighbor's wife came to the door and looked at him. "Why," she said, "there is Mr. Davis's dog come back again." She came out and spoke to Shaun. "Doggie," she said, "they've gone. They've gone away for a week."

"She does n't understand," thought Shaun. "Perhaps they will come soon. I'll — I'll wait."

VII

THE woman left him, and he lay down, so tired that he almost slept. He was aroused by a voice, impudent and familiar. “Hullo, Shaun. Back again?”

There stood Snap Horton, grinning broadly, his bushy tail waving. “One on you, Shaun!” he said. “They’ve gone on a vacation; everybody knows. But never mind; you sleep with me in our shed, and there’s plenty of food about the town.”

Every fibre of Shaun’s body quivered at the sight of his old intimate—his tempter. He jumped up, growling.

“Go away!” he cried.

Snap started back. “Shaun?”

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“Go away!” repeated Shaun. “I hate you!” He took a step forward; his hair was bristling. “Shall I bite you?” Snap was a coward, and he fled.

The long day wore into the long evening. Shaun never left the steps. Toward night he saw a form coming down the street, and knew it for Jack Rogers on his evening rounds. In behind each house, coming out quickly or slowly as he found more or less to eat, occasionally emerging hurriedly as if chased, came the second of Shaun’s old cronies. Shaun watched him with growing shame. Once he had joyously accompanied Jack on these tours of greediness; now it seemed a small and currish thing to do. Jack knew by experience that there was never anything at the Davis house; he was trotting

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by when he perceived Shaun. Shaun turned his head away.

But he heard the fawning voice. "Why, Shaun, old boy ! So glad to see you back. Folks away, aren't they ? Well, come with me, and we'll get along together."

Shaun slowly rose to his feet, and if his legs trembled with weakness, they also trembled with rage. "See here, Jack Rogers —"

"Well, Shaun," said Jack, smoothly, "if you won't, you won't. To-morrow, perhaps." He trotted on.

The neighbor's wife came to her door and called him. She had a dish in her hand, and Shaun looked away from the temptation. She came to him and put the dish down near him ; a bowl also.

"A good bone," she said, "and some bread and milk. There, doggie, you look

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hungry. Now eat it all up." She patted his head and waited to see him begin.

Shaun wagged his tail, but drew back. "A good dog," he remembered, "lets only his master feed him." She pushed the food nearer, and the tempting smells came to his nostrils, but he still drew uncomfortably away. "It beats all," she said at last. "But I'll leave them with him." She went back to her own house.

It was lonesome in the gathering night, terribly lonesome. The presence of the food tempted him, and he withdrew to the lower step. White's cart went slowly by, with Cæsar following behind. The big dog looked at Shaun, but said nothing and trotted on. When he was out of sight, Shaun wept a few tears. "He warned me once," he said.

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Night came. When the moon rose Shaun felt the desire to howl, but struggled with it and mastered it. "One dog can annoy a whole neighborhood." Mr. Davis had once called him a public nuisance; he would be one no longer. He paced up and down; at times he slept fitfully. At last the morning dawned—a dreary day.

Then came Mopsy Frost panting up the street. He seated himself on the lower step.

"Snap told me he saw you yesterday," he said in his husky voice. "A little out of sorts, were n't you? He said he expected an apology. Ha! ha!" He paused for answer, but got none. "I came to offer you a share of something fine that I've found."

"Go!" cried Shaun.

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“ Shaun, when I ’ve fed you so many times ! ”

“ With your food,” said Shaun, bitterly, “ you betrayed me.”

The fat beast got himself off the step. “ Well,” he wheezed, “ I see Snap was right. *I* sha’n’t expect an apology.” He went away.

And now Cæsar White came again ; but instead of passing, he left his cart and trotted to the steps. Shaun dropped his ears and tail, and looked away. “ Why, Shaun ! ” said Cæsar, “ won’t you say good-day ? ”

“ I laughed at you,” muttered Shaun. “ I called you names.”

“ Let’s forget that,” said Cæsar, cheerfully. “ I’ve heard what Snap Horton’s been saying, and know you’re different now. You’re in hard luck. Is there anything I can do ? ”

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“Nothing, I’m afraid,” said Shaun.

“My master,” said Cæsar, with a little hesitation, as if approaching a delicate subject, “does n’t give me very much food. He does n’t believe in it. But you’re welcome to half of it. If you’ll come with me to-night —”

“Oh,” cried Shaun, much moved, “I have food here, but I don’t want any.”

“You have kind neighbors,” said Cæsar. “I’m glad you have food.” He looked up the street: his cart was turning the corner. “Well, I must be jogging. Good-bye.”

The day dragged on; Shaun had much to think of, many resolves to make, and an enemy within him, hunger, to conquer. It was hard to resist with the food so close by. To forget it he slept, and dozed away the hours — slept uneasily, with unpleasant dreams.

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Toward night he thought that some one was near him, and started up suddenly, crying, "Who's there?"

There was a rush of feet, and Snap Horton went flying away. But he bore in his mouth the bone for which he had sneaked up so quietly; and though the neighbor's wife, who had seen it all, came running out, it was too late. Shaun sat still, too proud to give chase, but his heart burned within him.

VIII

THAT day Shaun took comfort only in Cæsar White, whose brief words at evening cheered him for the night. But the night brought a late spring frost. Shaun could not sleep ; it was so cold that he had to keep in constant motion. The early sun brought warmth, but no true comfort. The neighbor's wife made it harder for him with fresh, more tempting food, and he carried his trembling little body away from her, across the street. But even when she was gone the food remained, and when he curled up on the steps to sleep the odors tantalized him. He repeated constantly, " I must n't eat," and, warmed at last by the sun, he slept.

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But sleep, which at first had been his comfort, now began to torture him as much as his waking. Hunger pursued him : he dreamed of beautiful dishes of food and woke in an agony, crying with fear lest he should taste them. Dozing again, he thought he was with Jack Rogers, rooting in garbage, and woke with the strength of his hatred of himself. When Cæsar came to speak with him he answered feverishly and strangely, so that Cæsar went away soberly. Shaun was very thin ; the gnawing at his stomach was increasing, and when he slept again the pain of his hunger waked him.

So passed a third day and night. People began to take notice of him, for the neighbors had told others. It irritated Shaun, in his weakness, to be stared at. It required all his strength

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to resist the temptations that were brought him. More than once he sank in a stupor that was not sleep; and when waking his head was not clear. And the fourth day revealed an evident difference in him: his bones were showing everywhere under his skin.

It was the middle of the afternoon. Shaun lay on the step, awake. His eyes were bright and strange, as if through them showed the fire of his energy, fitful just before its end. Snap Horton, Jack Rogers, Mopsy Frost, had not come near him again. But many others had spoken to him, new friends whom he remembered thankfully all the rest of his life. And the neighbor's wife was still with him, coaxing him to eat, and almost crying with pity. "If I knew where Mr.

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Davis was," she said to herself, "I'd write him."

A gentleman passed by, the postmaster, and she called him hastily. Shaun recognized a friend of his master's, and feebly wagged his tail. "Why, Shaun!" said the postmaster, and listened to the story of the woman. "Did n't he leave his address with you?" she asked at the end. "Cannot you write?"

The postmaster sat down on the step, and took Shaun's head on his knee. "Won't you eat, Shaun?" he asked. He took a piece of meat and held it to the dog's lips. "Here, try this!" But Shaun would not allow his mouth to be opened.

The postmaster laid the dog gently down, then stood up hastily. "This is n't a case for writing," he said. "I'll

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telegraph. If I know Davis, he'll be here in the morning."

Shaun half understood, and through a blur of tears he saw them leave him. Still he lay without motion, scarcely responding to words or caresses. At evening Cæsar White came by again. He looked at Shaun anxiously. "Shaun," he said, "you must eat soon. This can't go on much longer."

"A little longer," said Shaun.

Mercifully there was no more frost. All night long Shaun lay motionless, waiting for the day. Only the force of his will seemed to keep him alive. Through the dawn and early daylight he lay battling his weakness, till all the town was astir.

Then a carriage came down the street, hurrying from the railroad station. Shaun heard it coming, and

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opened his tired eyes. It stopped. He could not see, for his eyes were dim ; yet steps, familiar steps, hastened to his side, and he heard voices which he knew.

“ Oh, Shaun ! ” cried Mrs. Davis, “ how thin you are ! No, keep quiet, do not move.” She put her arms around him.

Still he could not see, but he heard now the other voice, quiet and strong, for which he had listened so long. “ Shaun ! ” said Mr. Davis. “ Good dog ! Here, boy, take this.” Shaun let his mouth be opened, and something flowed between his lips. It seemed to burn, but strengthened him.

What was this ? Tears were dropping on his head. “ Oh,” sobbed Mrs. Davis, “ he shall never leave us now ! ”

Shaun found her hand and kissed it.

Mystic and His Master

Mystic and His Master

I

A MAN and a boy were walking their bicycles along a country road, and every little while they looked back.

“Do you see him, father?” asked the lad.

“No, Ned. Ah, there he is, but of course he doesn’t see us. Whistle!” And they whistled together. “Whee! Whee-ee! Whee-oo-hee!”

At the end of the road, where it turned, appeared a brown and white dog, and if you knew about dogs you could tell he was a pup, because his legs were long and thin, and his ribs stuck out, and his head was too large

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for him. His long tail wagged every minute, as he went swiftly about from side to side of the road, looking for his little master. Because his tail wagged, you could be sure the dog was good-natured, but because it wagged in such an uncertain way you could know two other things. The first was that the puppy was puzzled and did not know how to find his master. And the second thing, which you could not know unless you had had experience with dogs, was that the puppy, although half-grown, was backward in learning and was not yet very strong-minded. Just exactly how this could be seen it would be hard to explain; but you could know it mostly, perhaps, because the wagging of the tail expressed good-nature and little else: it was a round-about wag, not firm and steady, but

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sometimes up and down and sometimes from side to side.

For you must know that dogs are like boys or girls: they are quick or slow, attentive or inattentive, just like the many in each class at any school; and all you can be sure of them is that there are no two alike. And dogs have this disadvantage over boys and girls, — that they have no schools, but must find out things for themselves. Of course, if a dog lived a year with his mother, she would teach him many things before he was old enough to go out into the world; but it happened in the case of this puppy, as with most, that he was taken away from his mother when he was about six months old, and having been almost the dullest of his brothers and sisters, he was making slow work of learning in the world the many

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things which he might have learned in the kennels.

Now this puppy was a pointer, with long legs, not a very long nose, and a handsome head. He had beautiful eyes, and a look about him which promised (and again I cannot say how, but any dog-man would know it at sight) that he would be a fine dog some day. So, since this was so, and as he was less nervous and more healthy than any of his brothers, he was chosen out of his family, even though he was so backward. He was named Mystic, and given a good home, and a kind little master, and a wise housefather and housemother who took good care of both himself and his master. And in the quiet little house in the quiet old town of Concord this puppy might spend all his life, *if he earned the right*

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to do so. Now this was a vital condition, and we must say at once that Mystic did not understand it. It was explained to him, of course, by his little master, who said on the very first day: “You shall live with me always, *if you are a good dog.*” And this If was so very important that Mystic ought to have been very sober about it, and to have made many resolves, there on the spot. But he did not, owing to his chief fault, which was a very great inquisitiveness, which means a wanting to know all about everything.

You may think it very strange to hear, almost in the same minute, first that this puppy, Mystic, was backward and a little stupid, and second that he wanted to know all about everything. But if you think a little, you will see that the two go very well together to

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make a troublesome fault, whether in dog or boy. For this puppy was so interested in all he saw that he turned from one thing to another so quickly that he never really learned about either, and would not seriously give himself to study. In the kennel, when his mother would gather her puppies for a lesson, Mystic was always darting off to chase a cricket or to smell at something; or even if he sat quite still he was not really listening, but was thinking of something else. If his mother had had reports to write to her master about her puppies, she would have written about Mystic, in very large letters, that he "lacked application." And that was the secret of it all.

But even though we leave the pup and his master at opposite ends of a long stretch of road, let us think of this

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matter a little further. Mystic's nose was keener than all his brothers' and sisters' noses, and his eye was the sharpest, and his brain cavity (which means the space in his head where he kept his thinking-machine) was really very large indeed. And Mystic's mother knew this very well, so she took great pains with him. Other people saw it too, and that was why he was picked out to go to just this little boy, who was to have the best dog to be found. But this nose (which is the keenest organ a pointer dog can have), and this eye, and this very large brain, were really for a while a great handicap to poor little Mystic, who was like the old woman that lived in a shoe: he had so many impressions he didn't know what to do. He saw so many more things than his brothers and sisters, and he smelt so

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many more, that his brain, which was to take note of everything important, really could n't put them down in the memory, and set them in order, and have them always ready for use, because there were always so many more new things to remark. And though Mystic's mother did n't know it, but instead got out of patience with him, poor doggie, he was always confused with the new things he saw. That was just the matter with him at the beginning of this story.

So now, having left the puppy in his difficulty long enough, trying to understand him, let us see how he gets out of it. He was sniffing about vainly on both sides of the road, and looking behind every tree and stone, and was even making quite a fool of himself in his efforts to find his master. For

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any dog who could think at all should know that a boy and a bicycle could not hide behind a rail fence or a hitching-post. Yet Mystic was most honest and earnest in his attempts, as his master could see when the sound of the whistle reached the dog's ears.

For Mystic, instead of stopping and listening, and so making sure what direction the whistle came from, thought — no, he didn't think, he guessed — that the whistle came from behind him, which was simply ridiculous, since he had already searched every foot of the road so far. But he was turning, and about to rush madly back, when his master's father's whistle, which was particularly loud and clear, made him sure that it could not come from that direction; so he turned the right way, and with great excitement galloped on,

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still looking behind trees and bushes, till at last he saw his two masters plain in the middle of the road, and ran to them with the greatest relief.

His master's father, whose name was Mr. Phelps, said: "Mystic, you are simply disgusting."

And his master said, leaning over and patting him: "Oh, Mystic, why won't you be a good dog?"

But one of Mystic's great drawbacks was that he had never really found time to study English. That is a duty which every pup owes to himself, since it will help him out of many a scrape if he only knows what people are talking about. Of course a dog can never know English as we know it, and all he does is to master the simpler words and sentences. But a wise dog studies very hard, and when he lies down in the

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room where people are talking, and every little while opens one eye and looks at you, you may be sure that he is not napping, but is keeping his eyes shut most of the time that he may hear and think the better. But just now Mystic, having heard only his own name and the words "good dog," and not knowing what the long word "disgusting" meant, wagged his tail and frisked about, until his master's father, who looked as disgusted as he said he was, remarked: "Well, Ned, we shall never have our ride if we don't go on." So they mounted and rode on, the little master looking back every half-minute to see if Mystic were following.

For a while Mystic followed very well indeed, remembering what a long time he had taken to find his master before. But the road went up hill and

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down, around corners which were the most entrancing imaginable for a dog, since here and there the woods came up close, and there were fields all about, and there were the most wonderful smells imaginable. And this must be remembered as Mystic's excuse, that he was born a hunting-dog, and his strongest instinct was to investigate every smell of a certain kind,—that is, the scents of wild creatures. He knew very well that his duty was to follow the road, and keep as near to his master as he could, and not take too much time for the smells of the roadside, not more than a sniff at each. But it was really most confusing for the poor puppy, because he knew that many things had happened just where he was running; and first he took more time than he ought, to see whether a squirrel or a

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rabbit had crossed the road ; and next he paused to consider just how long ago it was since that fox went by ; and then he galloped madly for a space, trying to catch his master again, and nearly caught him, being within sight of him. But then he felt safe and careless again, and when he came to a place where unmistakably a partridge had led her brood across the road, he stopped once more.

Now a partridge is one of the strongest temptations to a game dog, and as this was the fall of the year, the scent was particularly enticing. So Mystic followed it across the road and through the grass to the fence ; and the fence being loosely built, he slipped through and followed on the trail, getting more and more excited the nearer he got to the partridges. And he spent a good

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deal of time there, with great delight to himself but with none to the old partridge, who wanted to know what that dog was doing behind her. But then Mystic heard his master's whistle, and dashed back to the road, having lost every idea that he had in his head. He realized how long he had delayed, he knew how naughty he had been; and when he reached the road he rushed about frantically for a little while, and then ran at full speed back the way he had come.

And from a hill-top Mr. Phelps and Ned saw the whole thing, — saw Mystic in the fields, saw him rush back to the road, and saw him start away in the wrong direction. In a little while Mystic was out of sight, still running fast, and Mr. Phelps said: "We might as well go on, there's no use waiting.

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This has happened twenty times before."

"Yes, father," replied Ned, dolefully.

So they mounted and rode on, each thinking very hard, and each very much vexed by what had happened. But Ned was anxious as well, and his father was troubled, for they knew they could not live with that kind of dog. It seemed as if Mystic had not learned a thing in the six months he was with them. And Ned could n't bear to have his father troubled so, and his ride spoiled ; and Mr. Phelps did n't wish to make the boy unhappy. But they both knew that it was right, and even more than Mystic deserved, when at last Mr. Phelps said :

"I'll give that dog only another week."

Only another week, but it seemed

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right. For they had never taken a walk or a ride together and kept Mystic with them to the end ; they had never had any real satisfaction out of him. In six months' time the dog ought to have shown some improvement. It really began to seem as if Mystic were a fool-dog. There must be better dogs to be had.

II

IT was a very crestfallen Mystic who scuttled into the house when the door was opened to him, and the reason why it was opened was not to the credit of his intelligence. They had taught him, with ever so much pains, that when he was with his master he could be let into the house if he barked. Mystic's slow mind did not teach him that all he needed to do at any time was to bark outside the house, when some one would come to the door. They had tried him by leaving him outside while they went in, and the result invariably was that he remained there quite silent, until they opened and called him to enter. It was really very irritating that a dog who knew so

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much could not learn a little more, but Mystic never would bark for the door to be opened unless some member of the family were there in plain sight. This night when Mr. Phelps and his son arrived at home about dusk and found no Mystic waiting for them, they knew very well that he had lost himself again and might not be back for an hour. So Mr. Phelps went up-stairs to his own room; but Ned, lighting the lamp in the parlor, sat down to his lessons, with his ears ready to catch the slightest sound on the steps and piazza.

He wished very much for Mystic to arrive before his father came down-stairs again. But an hour went by, and no Mystic came; and after Ned had put aside his geography and made ready for supper and sat down once more, this time to his arithmetic, there

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was still no dog. For Mystic was still mixed up in the tangle of country lanes, where the dusk was giving him every kind of trouble, so that he very nearly reached Bedford instead of Concord, and all because he could neither remember the places where he had been before, nor follow the plain directions which other dogs gave him.

But at last he came down the old Bedford road and reached Concord by a back route, and did not know the town when he saw it. It seemed to him a strange place, there at Merriam's Corner; for he did n't recognize the memorial stone which marked the skirmish with the British, but took it for a very large stone set in the wall by chance, whereas any dog should know it was n't. However, he saw a dog approaching, solemnly jogging behind a

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cart, and Mystic made known his desire to be shown the way to Concord.

“Why, Mystic Phelps!” cried the strange dog. “Don’t you know your own town when you’ve reached it?”

“Why — why,” stammered Mystic, “it’s Cæsar White!”

“So it is,” answered Cæsar, impatiently. “Do you mean that you took me for a stranger?”

Mystic was obliged to confess that he had not known this friend of all the dogs in town, who followed White’s milk-cart into every street, twice a day the year round. “And am I really in Concord?” he asked hopefully, yet very much ashamed as well.

“Why, this is Merriam’s Corner,” explained Cæsar. “There is Lexington Road ahead of you. In five minutes you can reach the square.

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Have you been running away?" he asked.

"I got lost," answered Mystic, "and I'm so tired!"

"You can get home in eight minutes, if you hurry," said Cæsar. "Good-night."

So Mystic reached home by the light of the street lamps, and slunk up on his own piazza feeling very much like a sneak. He crept to the door-mat and sat there, wondering how long he would have to wait before his master discovered him, and longing so much for the good things, the warmth and the food, which he knew were inside. And he might have waited there a long time but for Ned.

Ned was still waiting for him, and the nearer it came to supper-time the less he could put his mind on his arithmetic

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and the more anxiously he listened for Mystic. For when supper came he would have to go out to the dining-room; and should Mystic arrive, the poor puppy must spend supper-time on the door-mat, for his feet on the piazza could be heard only from the parlor. Supper-time drew near, and Mr. and Mrs. Phelps came down-stairs, to sit and talk, and to make it more difficult for Ned to hear any sound outside. He put down his book and listened as closely as he could, until just as the door opened for Bridget to announce supper, he heard the slightest scratch of a dog's foot on the boards outside.

"There he is!" he declared, starting up.

"I heard nothing," said his father, "but go and look."

And there was Mystic, humble and

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penitent, who came creeping into the house with his tail between his legs, and went slipping along the walls to his bed in the corner. He felt, as three reproachful glances centred upon his head, as if the light of three burning-glasses was scorching him ; and he knew that the family was good to him, very good to him, to let him into the house at all. Were not other dogs very severely punished for running away, and was not this young master, who seized him in his arms, very kind and forgiving ? Mystic expressed by every means his gratitude that his master was still fond of him.

“ Supper is served,” announced Bridget, looking with a cold eye upon a scene now very familiar to her.

“ Oh, father, is n't he nice, is n't he a dear good dog ? ” cried Ned.

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“Very dear, very good,” answered his father, grimly. And his mother said :

“But he always acts so, Ned, whenever he gets lost, and yet it never does any good. Come to supper now, dear.”

Mystic and his doings were not spoken of at supper ; the subject was too old, and there was only the same thing to be said. But after supper, when all four were settled in the parlor, two visitors came who were of great interest to the Phelps family, and one of them was a good friend of Mystic's. They were Mr. Davis and his dog Shaun. Shaun was an Irish terrier, who has a separate story of his own. He was now a full-grown dog, although still young, but his wisdom made him very much respected among the dogs of Concord, and even the people were interested in him on account of what

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had happened to him. Mystic, when he saw Shaun, jumped up from the corner where he had been lying, and gave him such an uproarious welcome that Mr. Phelps had to tell him to be quiet.

“Steady!” said Shaun, also; “don’t behave so when you are on trial.”

That should have been enough to make Mystic stop and think, but the puppy was too heedless. “Oh, Shaun,” he said, “I’ve had such an afternoon!”

“What did you do?” asked Shaun.

“I went out bicycling with my two masters,” said Mystic, “and I got lost.”

Of course you understand that when a dog says he went out bicycling he doesn’t mean he rode himself, but that his master did. It is the same when a dog says he went out golfing or even

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skating. Shaun understood this, so all he said was :

“ Lost ? Not again ? ”

His tone was so very sarcastic that Mystic's tail curled right down under his body, and for a minute the puppy was a very uncomfortable dog indeed. But he tried not to let Shaun see this (though Shaun saw it just the same), and sat on his tail as if he merely had put it down on purpose, as a cushion, which of course no dog ever does. He said, as cheerfully as he could : “ Well, I do get lost a good deal, don't I ? ”

“ Only every day,” answered Shaun.

Now Shaun could have gone on being sarcastic, and every word he said would have made Mystic squirm. But he saw that that would do no real good, for Mystic was often humble, but got over it just as often. What Mystic

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needed was to understand the situation, and to learn to think. After that all would be right. And Shaun wondered if he could not help the puppy, and even considered it his duty to do so. He had not forgotten his own experiences, those bad times of his puppyhood, and they had taught him that a dog may make a great many mistakes while he is young, and yet after all turn out a good dog. Mystic had no bad faults, he did not run away on purpose, and he was sincerely fond of his master. There was hope for him, and Shaun began to think what could be done.

He caught a word from the conversation of the others, and knew that they were talking about Mystic. "Here," he said, "listen to what they are saying about you."

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“What’s the good?” asked Mystic, sprawling at Shaun’s feet and beginning to bite at his foreleg. “Let’s play.”

“Not here in this room, you foolish thing,” answered Shaun. “Come, listen, it’s very interesting.”

But Mystic said, “B-r-r-r!” and he took Shaun’s whole leg into his mouth. He made such a noise that Shaun, who was very much interested in the conversation, withdrew his paw from Mystic’s mouth and gave him such a slap that the surprised puppy yelped and rolled away. Mr. Davis looked at his dog in reproof.

“Never mind,” said Mr. Phelps, “Shaun is in the right of it, I’m sure, and it will do the puppy good.”

“My own master against me,” whined Mystic. And he felt so hurt that he slipped out into the hall, to a warm

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corner near the register, and curled up there. But Shaun, who could no more than Mystic bear the thought that his master should suspect him of being in the wrong, drew nearer to Mr. Davis and looked up into his eyes, and would not be satisfied until his master put his hand on his head, and made him know that he was pleased with him, as usual. Then Shaun lay down by his master's chair, and listened to the rest of the talk.

“He is a fine dog,” said Mr. Phelps, looking at Shaun with such a kindly face that the dog wagged his little short tail. “How do you manage to train all your dogs so well?”

“We went through enough with him,” said Mr. Davis, with a sigh as he remembered Shaun's puppyhood. Mr. Phelps nodded his head wisely, and at

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that sign that everybody in town knew all about his mistakes, the dog could not hide a little wriggle of shame. But Mr. Davis's big hand came down and patted him, and Shaun, who knew very well what his master's sympathy meant, felt better for it.

"But Mystic is so different," said Mr. Phelps. "He doesn't intentionally do wrong, he just forgets, or he doesn't think." He went on to give Mr. Davis an account of what happened that afternoon. "It is so strange that a hunting-dog of such parents [Mystic knew that both his parents were prize-winners] should lose his direction and then lose himself. Twice he went back the way we had come."

"Give him time," said Mr. Davis.

"I will give him a week more," answered Mr. Phelps.

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Then they had some more talk over the matter, one saying one thing and one another, until it came time for Ned to go to bed, and he kissed his mother and father, and said good-night to Mr. Davis. But before Ned left the room, his father called him to his side.

“We have talked a good deal about Mystic to-night,” Mr. Phelps said very kindly. “Do you understand his chief fault?”

“Not to remember what he is told,” answered Ned. And that, from Ned’s point of view, was Mystic’s chief fault, though we know more of the reasons for it than Ned did.

“Yes,” said his father. “And you see what trouble he makes us all for not remembering and not doing what he is told?”

“Yes, father,” said Ned.

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“Now tell me this,” said Mr. Phelps. “Is there not a boy in this town whose father has told him all the rules in Long Division, and yet who continually forgets them?”

Ned hung his head. “Yes,” he said.

“Why is it?” asked his father.

“Perhaps because he does n’t think,” said Ned.

“Perhaps,” said his father, “and perhaps that is why Mystic gives so much trouble. Now tell me this also. Is there not a boy in this house who sometimes forgets the rule that when the street lamps are lighted he is to come home?”

“Yes,” said Ned, deeply ashamed.

“So little boys are like dogs, aren’t they?” asked Mr. Phelps. “And we can learn things about ourselves by watching them, can we not?”

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“Yes, father,” answered Ned. Then he promised that he would do better, and went away to bed. Mr. Phelps and Mr. Davis began to talk about other matters, and Shaun went out into the hall and found Mystic, lying asleep in his warm corner. Shaun waked him.

“To be sleeping,” said Shaun, “when you should be learning things!”

“Oh,” answered Mystic, “I can’t be learning all the time.” And he yawned because he was sleepy, but it seemed as if it were the greatest bore to Mystic to learn anything.

“Do you *ever* learn?” asked Shaun. “Do you ever study anything out? Do you know how much trouble you are giving your master? Have you stayed with him on a single walk since you came to live with him? Have n’t you —”

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“Shaun!” cried Mystic, now wide awake.

“Have n’t you spoiled his walks and rides for him?” went on Shaun. “Have n’t you made him go out looking for you? Do you remember that evening when Mr. Phelps was out with a lantern looking for you at ten o’clock? *And is any man or boy going to put up long with a dog who gives so much trouble?*”

Shaun asked this with great emphasis, and it startled Mystic. An idea came to him, an unpleasant idea, a really dreadful thought. He could not speak at all. Then Shaun asked his last question.

“Do you know,” he said, “that Mr. Phelps has given you just a week to change your ways? If you don’t change, he will send you away.”

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Then Mystic started to howl, but Shaun stopped him ; and he would have cried, but Shaun would not allow that. "Not a whimper !" Shaun said sternly. "Don't cry, but think, and listen to me." So Mystic listened.

"I heard all they said about you," said Shaun. "They know all the things you do, and the reasons why you do them, as well as a dog himself. You turned back on your track this afternoon, do you know that?"

"Was that why I lost them?" asked Mystic.

"Yes," answered Shaun. "Never turn back on your track unless you know why. Remember, a man seldom turns back unless he has a reason, and that reason you can usually find out by watching him. If he goes to a house, then perhaps he will go back the way

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he came. But usually he goes on, and returns home by some other way. You should have followed the road on. They had bicycles, so you could not scent them very well. But you lose them even when they are out walking, it seems. And you are a pointer!"

"Yes, but —" began Mystic.

"No buts!" cried Shaun. "No excuses, understand! This is serious. Do you want to leave your home?"

"Leave here?" asked Mystic. "Why, I love my master!"

"Then you take a poor way of showing it," said Shaun. "Listen! You are not to excuse yourself to yourself, you are not to make any mistakes, you are to follow his scent —"

"But that is hardest of all," said Mystic.

"Of course it's confusing on a road,"

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admitted Shaun. "It's hard at any time. But your whole happiness depends on it. Now I will tell you more things, and if you do not remember every one of them, you may be in trouble."

And then for half an hour the two dogs lay down together, side by side, and while Shaun talked, Mystic listened. Shaun repeated and repeated and repeated. "Why," he said, "you should have learned all this in the kennel." But he repeated just as if he were teaching kindergarten, and Mystic, thoroughly scared, tried to learn it all.

"Come to me," said Shaun, when his master was ready to go, "if there ever is anything you wish to ask about. Or go to Cæsar White. Remember three things: study English, follow the scent,

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and *pay attention!*” And then Shaun was called away.

It was a sad, a very sad, and a very scared little pointer who lay awake that night more than he slept, in the warm corner by the register. Mystic felt all alone in the world; no one could help him but himself; he knew it was time he paid attention, he knew it was time he studied and thought, and for the next three days he was such a different dog that his master scarcely knew him.

“Why, father,” cried Ned, “Mystic knows enough to bark to be let in!”

“Just as you,” answered his father, with a laugh, “know enough to come in out of the wet. Education does not end there, my boy.”

III

IT was well for Mystic, and for Ned as well, that the puppy followed Shaun's advice. The young dog had before his eyes the unpleasant vision of another home, which might not be home at all, with unkindness, or at least harshness, and with poor food and little warmth. So he took pains. He studied his English as attentively as Ned studied his arithmetic ; he learned to know his master's trail even in the village square, where so many people passed and crossed, and he did such intelligent things that all were astonished and Mystic became very proud. He came in one afternoon with Ned, having followed the bicycle all the way for four miles, and without Ned's hav-

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ing to stop for him twice, or to whistle for him more than six times. All this Ned told at the supper-table with the greatest pride.

“Did n’t we do well?” he asked.

“We?” repeated his father. “Where does your credit come in? I noticed that you were half an hour late in returning.” Ned hung his head. “Tell me,” asked Mr. Phelps, “did you come straight home as soon as you saw the lamps were lit?”

“No,” murmured Ned. “I stopped a little while with Tommy Davis.”

“And I saw you,” said his father. “Ned, is your puppy learning to obey better than you?”

He did not insist upon an answer, but Ned felt very much ashamed; and Mystic, who in those few days had learned more English than he had in

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all his life before, understood and felt surprised. So little boys sometimes forgot, as well as dogs ! It was a new thing to Mystic, — a discovery which elated him, and which led to most unfortunate results, because he became a little proud and a little forgetful, and started the next day with the wrong feeling, so that he came to grief.

Ned was at school, his father was at business, and Mrs. Phelps was occupied with the quince preserves ; so Mystic gathered a piece of news at the square, and went to give it to Shaun, who could always be counted on to stay near the house at such times as he was not needed by his master. Shaun lay on the top door-step, and greeted Mystic very kindly.

“ I ’m doing very well now,” said

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Mystic, feeling much pleased with himself.

“Indeed?” asked Shaun, very pleasantly, and yet with such a touch of meaning in his tone that Mystic remembered the proverb, “Speakers should not say good of themselves.” Our puppy felt uncomfortable, so he hurried to tell his piece of news.

“Fido Jenkins is missing,” he said. He looked for Shaun to be surprised, but he was not at all.

“As I expected,” he remarked.

“You expected it?” asked Mystic.

“Yes, really I did,” answered Shaun, “and I’ll tell you why. There were a couple of strange men in town a day or so ago. They were almost trampish-looking, one of them tall and one short. Did n’t you see them?”

“No,” answered Mystic.

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“They came down our street just at dusk,” said Shaun; “they had passed the house an hour before. They tried to make me come to them; one of them had a piece of meat. You know what that means?” he asked, looking at Mystic.

“No!” cried Mystic. “What?”

“They wanted to steal me,” said Shaun, simply. “They looked at me very hard when they passed the house earlier, and probably noticed that I am of good breed. I’ve heard my master say he has refused one hundred and fifty dollars for me.”

“Indeed!” cried Mystic, and he took on a new respect for Shaun. He had cost but twenty dollars himself.

“I chased them away,” said Shaun, dismissing the subject of his own worth as if it had no interest for him. “But

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they were dog-men, I knew. They smelt doggy. So I said to myself that they would get some foolish little well-bred dog out of this town before very long. So they've got Fido? Well, I'm sorry. Take warning, Mystic."

"Oh, they'll never get me," asserted Mystic.

"Never speak to strange men, then," said Shaun. "That's all there is to it — Never! Just remember that."

"Not in any case?" asked Mystic.

"Why, if you're dying, starving, you could speak to them, but not in any other case. I wonder if Fido will get away from them."

So they talked about Fido, and the time passed pleasantly until it was the hour for letting out of school. Then Mystic went back home to meet his little master, and had a very good time

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until that afternoon about four o'clock, when he went out with Ned for a walk.

That was a late hour for an October walk, and Ned made the walk too long. But it was such fun, chestnutting, and throwing sticks for Mystic to bring (which the puppy had learned to do very nicely), that Ned was very much surprised when he saw the street lights shining in the distant town. He hurried straight home, never stopping to do more than whistle for Mystic, and expecting the dog to follow.

But Mystic was at that moment beyond his ears in a woodchuck hole, sniffing most eagerly after the dweller in that strange place, and giving muffled yelps down the winding tunnel, inviting the woodchuck out to fight. At the bottom of the burrow the furry animal listened very contemptuously to

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what he knew were only a puppy's barks, and did not care at all when he heard the dog digging. "He'll soon tire of that," he said.

Mystic did soon tire of that, and went to find his master. Ned was not to be seen. It took some time to unravel the mystery of his various tracks around the chestnut grove; the young dog became very puzzled after a while, and it was a long time before he found the freshest track which led out of the grove toward home. But the trail stopped all at once in the middle of a road, it led neither onward nor back, and Mystic did not understand what would have been plain at once to any older dog, that Ned had hailed a passing wagon and had been whisked home very quickly, still whistling for Mystic to follow.

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So there was Mystic in the middle of the road ; and he did not know any more than to run back to the grove and to sniff around for nearly half an hour, trying in vain to find some other way which Ned could have taken. At last he gave it up, and started for home by himself ; but he was somewhat confused by this time, not knowing, even though the moonlight was growing strong, in just which direction to go. And of course he chose the wrong way, for moonlight is a very perplexing thing.

After half an hour's wandering he was completely lost, being on the far side of the river, down by the last slope of Punkatasset Hill ; and he wandered along the stream, going at last in the right direction, but not knowing it. If he had gone on far enough he would

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have come to Flint's Bridge near the Minute Man, and from there could have made his way home, after a long, round-about journey. But as he followed the cart-track by the river's edge, he saw figures coming.

"There are men," he said ; and he was much pleased, having seen no one for half an hour. He crouched nearer the ground, wagging his tail humbly, and went toward the men gladly with a dog's "How do you do?" He did not notice that they were rough-looking men, nor that one was tall and one was short, nor did he remember his talk with Shaun. He thought that he would greet them and follow them a little way, and then if they did not bring him nearer home he would start out again for himself. Companionship is a very pleasant thing, but

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it sometimes betrays a dog—or a boy.

He went nearer the men, who stopped to look at him. One of them said : “ Why, there’s that pointer pup ! ”

“ They know me,” thought Mystic with great pleasure, and went to them very confidently, especially when one of them stooped down and said : “ Come here, good dog.” He felt the man’s hand on his head, and he thought how nice it was to be patted after his lonely walk. Then the man’s hand slipped down Mystic’s head to his collar, and took hold of that. The man said in a very businesslike way : “ The chain.” There was a clink as the other man drew a chain from his pocket. A snap of the catch, and Mystic was a prisoner !

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What a sinking of the heart he had, as he remembered ! What fright he felt, as he tried to get away ! He tugged, he jumped, he twisted, but all in vain. The chain and collar both were strong, the man struck him angrily with his hand, and then the two went on, taking Mystic with them. There was nothing that he could do : he lay down on the ground, and they dragged him, and it hurt ; he pulled back, and they jerked him, and that hurt ; he barked, and they kicked him, and that hurt most of all. At last he was both bruised and breathless, and had strength only to follow on quietly wherever they led. They came finally to a shanty in a hollow near some woods, and the men opened the door of the dark dwelling.

They heard a scuffling inside, and a

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strange husky bark, and something wheezing and pattering came toward them. One of the men said: "Hello, old girl," and he struck a light.

There was a broad squat bulldog right before them, and while the men dragged Mystic into the shanty and shut the door, she looked him all over. "Oh, you little fool!" she said, over and over; but it was so true, and Mystic was so tired and frightened, that he could not be angry, but stared with great alarm about this place, which was dirty and small, with neither bed nor chair, but with a few heaps of bedding on the earth floor, and an old mattress, and a broken down cook-stove. The men lighted a lantern, and Mystic saw that they were as dirty and rough as their house, and that the bulldog was scarred from many fights. It was a strange

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place with horrid companions. He saw no hope nor consolation in it at all until the tall man said : " Come out here, pup," and stooping, drew out from a heap of potato sacks a little white shivering dog, whom Mystic recognized as Fido Jenkins.

And if we could have looked in on them half an hour later, we should have seen the two men eating food, with the bulldog getting her share of it, but with Mystic and Fido, side by side, in the farthest corner of the shanty, too frightened to eat or to move. And when the other three were asleep and the shanty was in darkness, there the two unhappy dogs sat, all the night through.

IV

THERE is very little consolation in leaning up against another dog if he is weaker-minded than yourself (and Fido was a very weak-minded little dog indeed). Also, there is not much use in a companion whom you must help. These two things Mystic found out before morning, as he talked with Fido very quietly in the darkness of the shanty, where the moon made very little light. The two men and the bulldog snored very loud, and the place was damp and cold, and Fido had so few ideas in his head that he was irritating. Although he had been there twenty-four hours, he did not know the bulldog's name, nor anything about the men, nor had he any ideas at all, except

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that the end of all his happiness had come. For Fido belonged to a sweet little girl, who bathed him twice a week, and fed him daintily, and put him to sleep in a little basket with an arched top which held a fur rug for him to lie on. But Fido had made up his little mind that he should never see his mistress again, and he was mourning her very sincerely and sadly, but in quite a cowardly fashion, as Mystic felt. And perhaps Fido's presence at the shanty did, after all, do Mystic some good; for out of very exasperation at his companion's weakness, he resolved that he should see his little master again, or at least not lose him without a struggle.

And then and there Mystic's puppyhood began to fall away from him, as he realized the seriousness of his situation.

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Something must be done very soon. For the world was large, as he had many times heard ; and if the men should go away from Concord, and should carry him only a few hours in the steam-cars, as was quite possible, how could he ever find his way back again ? None of the maxims he had ever heard could tell him that ; not even Shaun, though he had run twenty miles in a night to find his home, would know what to do in such a case. Therefore he must get away from these men before they went away from Concord, for — oh, then he remembered it with the greatest pang — he was on trial at his own home. And Ned had probably sat up late for him, and perhaps Mr. Phelps had been out again looking for him, and there were only three days left of his week. How dreadful was it to think that even if he got back home

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Mr. Phelps might decide not to keep him !

At this idea of the result of his folly, he could not help weeping, and a big tear rolled down his nose and dropped on Fido's head.

“ Are you crying ? ” asked Fido.

“ Yes,” admitted Mystic.

“ Oh, don't cry,” said Fido, in his weak little voice.

Then Mystic almost laughed, as much from nervousness as from amusement, at the idea that Fido should have any bravery in the whole of his little body. And out of sheer pity for the fox-terrier, who trembled the night through, Mystic resolved to help him and to get him away safely, if he could.

In the morning, and quite early too, the men were awake and stirring to make their breakfast. By daylight

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they looked more unattractive than the night before. Mystic would not taste their food. "Why do you?" he asked of Fido.

"A dog must eat," answered Fido.

"Oh, you 'll come to it," wheezed the bulldog. "They all do."

And yet the bulldog cocked her head at Mystic, and wondered if her word would come true. For Mystic sat upright, and looked so firm and haughty that the bulldog knew he would try to escape. Fido, too, saw something new and strange in Mystic's appearance, although he did not understand it.

"Mystic," he said, "you look different from yourself."

"I am different from myself," answered Mystic, only half knowing how much his own words meant. But something inside of him had changed,

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and he knew that he would never be the same careless puppy again. Even the men noticed it.

“I didn’t know he was such a handsome dog,” said the taller. “Let’s get him out into the light and take a good look at him.”

He snapped the chain on Mystic’s collar again, opened the door, and led him outside. A mist lay in the hollow; the sun had not yet pierced through it, and yet the air was very welcome to Mystic. He felt the desire for freedom, he saw what he could do, and as the man paused to look about him, the dog gave a sudden jump and twitch, and jerked the chain out of the man’s hands. Mystic was free!

Mystic was free — but, poor Mystic! The door of the shanty was open, Fido was untied within, and even stood peer-

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ing out. Mystic remembered his resolve and waited to help Fido away. "Come!" he barked. "Fido, come at once!" He stayed too near the man in his anxiety to help his friend, and the man was too quick.

"Shut the door!" he cried to the other man. Then, as Fido hesitated, the other man shut the door; and the man outside, throwing himself right down on the ground, missed Mystic, but caught and held the chain. Our poor puppy was led inside again, and fastened in the corner.

"Oh, Fido, why weren't you quicker?" he moaned, much disappointed. Fido had no excuse to make, except that he didn't think; which is a favorite excuse with both boys and dogs, but which really is no excuse at all. Those who don't think and those

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who think too much make most of the trouble in the world — but this was no help to poor Mystic. The men went away, leaving him chained there in the corner, and he, with Fido and the old bulldog, were shut up together for the whole day.

“Take care of them, Juno,” said the men to their dog when they left the shanty.

Strange to say, though she watched them carefully, the bulldog became friendly. “I like you better for that,” she said to Mystic; “I do, indeed. And you, you little idiot,” she asked of Fido, “why did n’t you scoot? You’ve lost your last chance to get home.”

“What will they do with us?” asked Fido.

“They will take you away, and soon, too,” answered the bulldog. “I’ve lived

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with them years now, and they always do the same thing. When they are out dog-catching they never stay more than a week in the same place. Then they will take you to the city and sell you. They won't stay here more than another day."

That time seemed short to Mystic, very short indeed, and poor Fido began to weep. "Fido," said Mystic, "you would do better if you dug your way out of this shanty."

"And leave you?" asked Fido.

"Never mind me," answered Mystic.

And Fido might have been small-minded enough to follow that advice, but Juno spoke up. "He shall not dig his way out," she said. "I am big enough to prevent that."

"If we were outside and could run free," answered Mystic, "you should

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never prevent us from going where we wished."

"Very true," answered the bulldog, without anger, "for my legs are too short for running, I can only waddle." And she laughed good-naturedly. "But come, cheer up, and let's be as sociable as ever we can under the circumstances."

She told them a good deal about her life, that morning. She had had a good home once, she said; these men had stolen her. But that was years ago.

"I might have been a well-behaved dog myself," she said. "But I was only a pup, as you are. You soon get used to any kind of life."

It was dreadful to Mystic to hear her say it. Get used to this life? Never! "They are kind to you?" he asked.

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“I don’t suppose that you would call it kind,” answered Juno. “They are pretty rough sometimes, when they haven’t had a good day. And they used to make me fight for money — see my scars. But that was years ago, and the police have stopped that now.”

“I should think the police would stop their stealing dogs,” said Mystic, with strong indignation.

“Ah!” answered Juno, and Mystic never forgot her expression of pride in her masters. “They are too clever to be caught. That is why they never stay long in one place.”

“If I had my way they would stay long in one place,” retorted Mystic, “and that place is prison.”

“You are very bold,” said Juno, “to say that to me. But you have reason to be angry, so I will not bite you.”

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“Bite me!” cried Mystic. “Kill me! It would be better than to be taken away.”

And our poor puppy almost broke down, despairing of any help. For in that out-of-the-way place, chained in the shanty, how should he ever get back to his master again? Fido and even Juno tried to comfort him. It was all very well for Fido, who had given up the struggle already, and it was natural to Juno, who had forgotten all about a gentler life; but Mystic remembered very keenly his home and his master, and all that Shaun had said to him, and as he thought he saw all that was best slipping away from him, he was even ready to give up hope.

V

NOW let us turn to Ned, who lost much sleep on that night when Mystic did not come home, and blamed himself a good deal for what had happened.

“Had I only waited at the chestnut grove,” he said very frankly to his father, “and seen that Mystic heard me and was coming after me, he would not have been lost. He could not have been very far away when I started for home.”

“Forgetfulness is costly ; disobedience brings trouble both to boys and dogs,” thought Mr. Phelps. He did not say it ; he saw that Ned felt very badly, and was learning the lesson in his own way. And he too felt troubled

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about the dog ; he was fond of the playful little puppy, and it was with a sad heart that he tacked up in the Post Office, on the next day, a notice offering a reward for the return of Mystic. The two ragged men read the notice that morning, going boldly into the town and walking about the streets. The reward was a good one, but they thought that perhaps they could sell Mystic for more money still ; and besides, there was Fido to be disposed of, and they did not care to attract attention to themselves by returning any dogs. If no notice was taken of them, perhaps they could return to the town in a year or so, and steal again. Finally, they meant to get another puppy on this last day, as well as Shaun, of whom they still had hopes. When they went near Shaun's house,

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however, the Irish terrier, though he did not as yet know of Mystic's disappearance, made it very unpleasant for them, so that the tall man left the street with one more tatter to his clothes. And the puppy which they had hoped to get was in the house all that day, so that he was not to be had.

Ned, however, knew nothing of this, and when he passed the two men in the street did not look at them closely enough to remember their faces. He did not look at many strangers that day, in fact, for all his spare time he spent looking for a brown and white pointer pup, who was not to be found, and had not been seen all that day, anywhere in the town. In the afternoon Ned went out alone to the chestnut grove, in the hope of finding Mystic there, but he was nowhere. And right by the wood-

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chuck hole which had delayed Mystic on the evening before, Ned sat down, knowing that no one could see him, and wept a few quiet tears for the dear dog whom he began to fear he should never see again. He delayed there so long that a second time, before he rose, the street lights were twinkling in the town, and the moon was growing bright.

And yet Ned did not notice the lights at all, so full was his mind of his dog. If Mystic were perhaps somewhere there in the woods, if maybe he had fallen into a hole and could not get out, he would need his master. And so Ned turned away from the town, for the moon was strong and the west was still bright, and said to himself that he would go "a little way" toward the river, and then he would return. He crossed two

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slopes of the hill in the short dry grass ; then he followed for a while along a cart-track, and then he saw the river, and went for a short distance beside it. And next he saw, moving along the top of a gentle slope, something which in the moonlight looked like a dog. He went toward it, wondering if it were Mystic at last.

It was not a dog, but a fox, going out at that time to see if all of the nearest flock of hens were safely in their yard. He was, however, a very large fox, and in the moonlight the mistake was easily made. Now a fox is a very cool animal, and though he saw Ned about the time that Ned saw him, he did not run, but moved slowly away as the boy came toward him, knowing that at any instant he could disappear in the shadows. He led Ned quite a long

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walk, now out of sight for a while and then in plain view, and Ned followed eagerly after him, although in such doubt that he did not whistle. It would not have been like Mystic to keep so carefully out of the way. But when at last Ned did whistle, the animal melted away into the distance, and Ned never saw him again, although more than once, in the next half-hour, he heard the fox's short peculiar bark. When Ned stood still, after a last attempt to follow, and began to look about him, he realized that he did not know where he was.

That is a confusing tangle of woods and thickets where Ned now found himself wandering. There are many pasture spaces and many clumps of trees and shrubs, while everywhere cart-tracks lead in all directions. Ned followed

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these for a time, but when he came to a cross-road where three met, and saw that none of them was used very often, he began to think that they would be of no use to him. He looked off to where he supposed the river to be, but both he and the moon were to the west of it, and he caught no glimmer of water to guide him. He began to be alarmed, until at last he found a track larger than the others, and resolved to follow it to its end. Had he gone in one direction, he would have come to the main road, but instead he turned the other way. He followed it for nearly half a mile, until at the end it led him to a little hollow, in the middle of which stood a shanty from whose windows light was shining. "So now," thought Ned, "I can ask my way home." He went and knocked at the door.

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There was a quick hoarse bark and a scramble inside, and men leaped to their feet. Some thing, some dog, came and panted just inside the door, and Ned began to feel nervous; the panting was wheezy and eager. The men moved about quickly inside, but they did not come to the door, and at last he knocked again. Then the door was opened.

A great bulldog came sidling out with astonishing quickness and began to sniff at his legs. A bulldog looks so threatening that it is no wonder Ned felt uneasy. Two men, too, stood and stared at him, and were by no means pleasant-looking, so rough were they. They seemed very stern at first until they saw clearly who was there. Then they laughed shortly and seemed relieved. "It's only a boy," said one.

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Ned saw nothing else in the shanty until he spoke.

“Can you tell me the way to Concord?” he asked.

Then all of a sudden there was a movement in a heap of bedding, and a dog came leaping out from it and would have run to Ned but that a chain held him back. It was Mystic, and he tugged at the chain and cried out to his master.

“You’ve got my dog!” cried Ned.

“So he’s yours, is he?” asked the tall man. But he was not pleased, and the two men looked at each other and scowled.

“Where did you get him?” demanded Ned.

“We found him,” answered the short man.

Then, at the sound of the voices, Ned

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saw a little white head come out of another heap of bedding, and he recognized Fido Jenkins.

“Perhaps you found that dog too,” he said.

“We did,” answered the short man.

There was something in his voice which was very unpleasant, so that Ned looked at him startled. The man was scowling at him, but he spoke again quietly.

“Come in,” he said, “and we’ll tell you about it.”

Ned drew away. “No,” he replied. “But give me my dog.”

“We deserve something for keeping him,” suggested the man.

“Come to my father’s house in the morning,” answered Ned, “and he will pay you ten dollars.”

“All right,” returned the man.

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“We’ll bring the dog in the morning.”

But all this time Mystic was tugging at his chain, whining and crying. Ned could not leave him, and besides, he distrusted the men.

“No,” he said again. “But give the dog to me.”

The tall man looked at the other, then he turned away and went to the table, where he sat down. “All right,” he said. “Come in and get your dog. Come here, Juno ; let the young gentleman alone.”

The bulldog left Ned, and went to her master ; and the short man drew away from the door, to leave room for Ned to enter. Ned hesitated, but Mystic whined so piteously, and Ned felt so relieved that the bulldog had left him, that he took a step inside the

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shanty. Then he looked at the men. The short man was taking out his pipe as if to fill it, and the tall one was pulling the bulldog's ears and paid no attention to Ned. The boy felt safe, and went right up to Mystic, who cried for joy to feel his master's hand.

But the chain was not merely snapped on Mystic's collar; the men had locked it. Ned turned to them.

"Unlock this, please," he said.

"I think not," said the big man.

Then, as he spoke, the short man shut the door and turned the key in the lock, and there was Ned, shut up in that place with those men, who began to smile at him.

"Well, sonny?" said the tall one.

"Let me out!" cried Ned. "Unlock this dog and let us both go!"

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“Not at all,” said the smaller. “Now don’t get excited, my boy. There’s no good in that. Sit right down and make yourself at home.”

“What are you going to do with me?” asked Ned, trembling.

“I don’t know,” was the answer. “You see, we can’t let you go, because you’d make trouble for us. And we won’t give up the dogs.”

“Small boys are of use,” said the tall man. “I know a man who will give fifty dollars for a boy like you to do the work about his place.”

“You wouldn’t dare take me away,” cried Ned.

But he clung to Mystic as he said it, and tears started to his eyes. Boys had been taken away from their parents, he knew. How dreadful it would be! He did not feel Mystic licking

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his hands, so frightened was he at the threat.

“Would n’t dare?” asked the small man. “Well, we shall see.”

Then Ned choked down his tears: these men should not see him crying. And he, too, in that unpleasant shanty grew older from his trial, as had Mystic.

“You won’t let me go?” he asked.

“No,” was the answer.

Then Ned thought of a trick. “I’ll go without the dog,” he said.

But the men saw through it. “You would have the police here before morning,” they answered. “You’ll stay here, sonny, for this night at least. To-morrow — we’ll see.”

Then the little man approached him. “You’ve got a watch?” he asked. “Let me see it.”

“You shall not have it,” cried Ned, clasping his hands over his pocket.

The man took hold of his wrists. Ned never forgot that clutch. Great, rough grimy hands they were, too strong for him to resist. They drew his hands away from the pocket, and then one hand held both of his while the other took out the watch.

“It’s my own,” cried Ned. “Father gave it to me last Christmas.”

“And much obliged we are to your father,” laughed the man. “My own doesn’t go very well, so I’m having it mended just now.” He laughed again, and Ned knew that he had no watch at all. “Until mine comes back, I’ll keep this.”

“See if he’s got any money,” said the other man.

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“Where’s your purse?” asked the short man. “Shall I take it out?”

But Ned never wanted to feel again the touch of those hands. There was no good in resisting, so he took out his purse and gave it to the man, who poured its contents out into his great palm.

“Only forty cents,” he grumbled, “and a little key. Here, you’re welcome to the key.”

Ned took it and put it in his pocket, but suddenly he was pleased. That key — it was the key to the padlock on Mystic’s collar! Perhaps he could get the dog away. He sat down beside Mystic, and drew the dog into his lap, where the poor puppy lay trembling. Mystic knew what was wrong; he believed that his master could not help him, but forgetting himself he tried to

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comfort Ned. And Fido, too, crawled to the boy and snuggled by his side.

The men paid little more attention to Ned, but played cards for a time, after they found he would not take their food nor sit at their table. It was hard and lonely for Ned there, as he thought of his home. Supper time passed, evening drew into night ; what were his father and mother thinking ? Finally the short man looked at Ned's watch.

“ Half-past eight,” he said. “ Well, we must be moving early in the morning. It's time for bed now.”

And in a little while the light was out and the men were sleeping, while their bulldog lay at the threshold. Ned still sat by the wall, with the two dogs. Fido had curled up to sleep, but Mystic still from time to time pressed closer to

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Ned and showed that he was awake. It grew tiresome, very tiresome there. Ned at last became sleepy himself. But Mystic had never been so wide awake.

Mystic had been thinking and waiting. He was waiting for Juno to go to sleep, and he was thinking that then he could do something. Juno was at last asleep, snoring loud; and then Mystic very silently slipped from Ned's lap.

Ned heard him doing something — what was it? Mystic was digging by the wall of the shanty. The floor was of dirt, there was no stonework to keep a dog from digging out, and Mystic, while the light lasted, had picked out the best place to dig. It was astonishing how soon he had made a little hole. Ned felt, and patted Mystic. “Good dog!” he whispered, and tried to help with his hands.

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But they had to be quiet — oh, so quiet! Both understood that they must not wake foolish little Fido, who in his excitement might betray them. They dared not work as hard as they wished, nor throw the dirt inward as fast as they were able, for fear that the noise would wake Juno. But Ned put his whole arm through the hole at last, and felt the night air. Then the hole grew larger still, and Mystic was very proud of their progress, when all of a sudden he felt Ned draw him away from the work, upon his lap. Then Ned, by patting Mystic's head, made him understand that he was to keep quiet, and presently the dog felt his master working at his collar. It was difficult in the dark, but Ned found the padlock, and put the key in, and took off the collar. Mystic felt a delightful freedom when,

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with the heavy chain, it slipped from his neck. Then Ned gently put him at the work again.

They dug all the harder now, especially since Mystic was hoping for too much. He believed that he could dig a hole large enough for his master to squeeze through. Ned was wiser. He thought that if Mystic could get out and could find his way home — What was that ?

Mystic had thrown some of the dirt too far backward, in his eagerness. Some of it struck Juno, some of it fell on one of the men. Juno's snoring ceased, and they heard her start up. The man awoke as well.

“What was that ?” he asked.

Ned seized Mystic and began to push him through the hole. “Go !” he whispered, “Go !” The man sat up.

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“Dirt on me?” he cried. He struck a match.

Mystic wriggled and squeezed ; Ned pushed him. The man, as he stood up, saw the dog’s hind legs working as hard as they could ; the very tail seemed to be pushing.

“Juno !” cried the man.

And Juno sprang for Mystic. But Ned — and it took great courage to try to stop the dog — threw himself in the way and caught at Juno’s collar. He held her back just a second, just a single instant. But in that instant Mystic slipped through.

“Go home, Mystic !” called Ned, loudly.

Juno would have turned on Ned, but the man stopped her. He caught up the collar and chain, and looked at them ; the other man rose and looked at them

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also. Then they looked at Ned. He showed them the key.

“I am much obliged for giving it back,” he said.

He thought they would strike him, they were so angry ; indeed, the tall man started to do so, but the other stopped him.

“No use,” said the short man. — “You think you’re very clever,” he said to Ned. “But *you* don’t get away from us, anyway.”

Then Ned, still sitting there by the wall, did a very bold thing. He picked up little Fido bodily and shoved him through the hole.

“All right,” he said.

The tall man struck him, this time, and Ned fell sideways. It hurt, it hurt terribly ; he felt the blood on his forehead, and then he almost fainted. But

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he did not care; he had saved the two dogs. Even if the men took him away with them in the morning, the dogs would get home. He lay quiet, and gradually began to understand what the men were saying.

“Go at once, and take the boy with us,” the shorter was urging. “Suppose the dog brings men on us here?”

“He wouldn’t be so clever; he’s only a pup,” objected the other man.

But they were very undecided what to do, and discussed the matter for a long while.

VI

MYSTIC stood outside the shanty, and trembled as he heard what was going on within. He did not run when Ned told him to; instead, after a moment he was about to enter again, to stand by his master, when just then Ned shoved Fido through. Poor little Fido shivered and whimpered in the night air; he did not seem to realize how much Ned had done for him.

“It’s very cold, is n’t it?” he asked.

But when Mystic saw Fido come through, he understood Ned’s purpose. The dogs were to go home — and get help! He could do it, or at least he must do it. But he had been lost when the men found him, and they had led

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him to the shanty at a time when he was too exhausted to take note of where he was going. How should he find his way back ?

“ There’s a frost, I do believe,” whined Fido.

There was a frost, and the grass was white with it as Mystic remembered how he could find his way home. His own track was a day old ; he could not follow it. But Ned had come scarcely three hours ago, and his trail could be traced. Mystic went to the door of the shanty, and started back along the way Ned had come. It led along the road, and Mystic ran as fast as he dared, for he must not miss it.

“ Wait, Mystic ! ” fretted Fido, hurrying along behind.

Wait ! Mystic wished he might go faster. But the frost troubled him very

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much, and the cold scent was hard to follow. Again and again he had to walk; once he was obliged to go back and trace the way carefully before it became clear again. This delay was so great that he did not dare risk it again, and so had to go very slowly. He was impatient, and had to control himself; he was eager to dash forward, straight to the town, and instead he had to walk almost all the time. And all the while behind him trotted Fido, saying: "Mystic, do you know where you are going?" or, "Mystic, can you find your way home?"

But Fido began to complain seriously when Mystic left the cart-tracks and began to wander about over the fields, following Ned's trail in all its windings. "Why, you've got no plan at all," Fido whimpered. "You go every which

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way. Don't you think that if we started off together and went straight, we should find something?"

But though Mystic made Fido no answer, being fully occupied in following the faint scent, he knew he was taking the only means to bring him surely home. They might try to find the town, and really find it; on the other hand they might get hopelessly lost. And how much that would mean to Ned! No, Mystic would do only this one thing; it was slow, but sure.

His resolution and his devotion showed very clearly as he worked, in and out, up slopes and down hillsides, among thickets and again in open fields. They crossed the fox's track, and Mystic snarled at it, but would not stop. Fido was enough to make any dog angry, but Mystic paid him no attention, and

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the little terrier had enough sense to follow the pointer—or perhaps he was afraid to go away by himself. At any rate, Fido was still with Mystic when he reached the chestnut grove and passed through it to a playground which was known, even in the dark, to every dog in town.

“Here we are at last!” cried Fido, in delight. “How slow you’ve been! Come on now. We can go straight.”

They rushed on together, directly for the town. It seemed near; there were the lights, although it was nearly midnight.

“Hurrah!” barked Fido, but Mystic was silent. His night’s work was far from done. Suddenly he stopped.

“What are you waiting for?” cried Fido.

“Mr. Phelps has been here,” answered

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Mystic, sniffing at the ground. "He has passed by recently, within half an hour. The scent is fresh."

"What of it?" demanded Fido.
"Come on home."

"He is looking for Ned," answered Mystic. "I must find him." And to Fido's disgust Mystic began again to trot along slowly, his nose to the ground.

"You don't mean to say," Fido demanded, "that you're not going home? I am, at any rate."

"Go home, then," answered Mystic.
"But I must find Mr. Phelps."

And then — can you believe it? — Fido went home. He ran to his own house and cried outside the door, and his dear little mistress let him in, and Fido was so delighted that he forgot all about Mystic still in the fields and the

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boy friend who had helped them both. Other dogs reminded him many times of that ; they called him a “deserter,” and he was never very popular in Concord afterwards. But Mystic went on alone until he found Mr. Phelps.

Parties were out searching in all directions for Ned. Mr. Phelps, half distracted, was leading one, and after four hours they had found no trace of the missing boy. But when they heard a bark of delight and Mystic came bounding among them, they had a glimmer of hope. They knew him by the light of their lanterns.

“It’s Mystic !” cried Mr. Phelps, as the dog fawned on him.

“It’s all right now, then,” said Mr. Davis. “He’ll find the boy for us.”

But Mr. Phelps was so anxious and so unhappy that he could not believe it.

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“Mystic find anything?” he asked.

“He is always getting lost himself.”

“But see,” said Mr. Davis, “the dog has lost his collar; he’s been chained. And look!”

For Mystic had already left them and had run back on his trail. “Come!” he seemed to say, as he looked at them over his shoulder. “Come, master!”

And Mr. Phelps almost cried with relief; the tears actually stood in his eyes. “Lead on, Mystic,” he called to the dog. “We will follow.”

Mystic led straight to the chestnut grove; he knew that way without a trail. There he seemed at a loss, and cast about in circles, so that they thought him puzzled. “He’ll never do it,” said Mr. Phelps, ready to despair again. But Mr. Davis reassured him, and then Mystic came upon the trail

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and began to follow it. The men went after.

He went quicker now ; he was following his own fresh trail and not Ned's cold one. But the men kept up with him, for it was still no easy task for him in the heavily falling frost. And as he led them on, they began to marvel at him. In and out he went, now in wide circles, now with sudden turns, and always they heard the eager snuffing at the ground, the steady patter of his feet, and the little excited whines as he came to some place that he knew. There in the night, by lantern light (for the moon had set), it was curious to watch him working, to see that he knew what he was doing, and to realize that he was bringing them to the boy.

“Wonderful !” they whispered among themselves.

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But Mr. Phelps pressed on after Mystic, close on his footsteps, and with shining eyes. This was the dog he had despised, who had no gratitude, who must be given away! How he had misjudged the puppy! His eyes were still upon the dog, when those behind him murmured together. Mr. Phelps looked up. There was a hollow below them, and there was the shanty, with its windows shining light. Mystic stopped and whined once more. They understood him as if he had spoken.

“Ned is there. I have done my part; now you must do the rest.”

He did not know what was the dully gleaming thing which Mr. Phelps drew from his pocket; he had never seen a revolver before. Mr. Davis produced one also. The two looked at each other with much resolution.

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“If there’s been any foul play —” muttered one of the men behind.

The threat was not finished, for Mr. Phelps moved forward, and all followed him. They went down into the hollow silently; they approached the shanty with noiseless steps; they formed in a group close to the door, and Mr. Phelps put his ear to it to listen.

The men inside were still discussing; Ned was still sitting by the wall, the blood unwiped from his forehead. The longer they delayed, the more hope he had, for he believed thoroughly in Mystic. But the time was very long. He had listened and listened in vain for the sound of footsteps outside, and the men had at last come to a decision.

“Well, then,” said the tall man, “let’s go, and at once. We’ll take the boy with us.”

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They rose from the table, and Ned could have cried. One more hour of delay, and he felt sure of safety ; but now —

The door fell from its hinges with a clatter. There were men in the doorway ; Ned's own father stood there, and Mystic, his dear Mystic, came darting to his side. The two men started back, and each put his hand to his pocket ; but those two pistols which Mystic did not understand had much meaning to the dog-stealers, and when they saw them pointing they stood quiet.

“Quiet your dog,” ordered Mr. Phelps, “unless you want it shot.” For Juno was very threatening, not knowing what the new-comers meant by their sudden entrance.

The tall man sat down in his chair again, and took Juno by the collar.

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“ All right, guv’nor,” he said ; “ only don’t shoot.”

Then Ned’s father went to him ; and some of those who stood there at the door wiped their eyes as they saw the meeting.

VII

AND the end of all this? I think it can best be told in two conversations which took place about a week after Ned was lost. The first was between Ned and his father and mother. Ned stood at his mother's knee one evening, lingering after he had said good-night. His mother held his hand, thinking how precious her boy was to her, and how near she had come to losing him. Mystic sat close by.

“And so the two men are sent to prison?” asked Ned.

“Yes,” said his father; “they were sentenced to-day.”

“What will become of Juno?” asked Ned. “Did Mr. Jones the ex-

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pressman really mean that he would take her?"

"He has her now," answered Mr. Phelps, "and she appears very contented. I don't believe she will ever see her old masters again."

"Father," said Ned, slowly, "I want to say you have been very good to me, not to blame me at all for what happened—that night."

"I did n't think I needed to," was the answer.

"It was all my fault," went on Ned, speaking with difficulty, for it is hard to confess an error. "I should have noticed the time. I—I will never do such a thing again. I have been at home on time since then."

"My good boy!" said his mother, drawing him down to her and smoothing his hair.

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“ And about sending Mystic away — ” began Ned, beckoning his dog toward him.

“ Never refer to that again ! ” cried his father, in a very threatening voice. He caught up Mystic into his own lap. “ I ’m ashamed of myself,” said Mr. Phelps. Then they all laughed and felt better.

“ I think I ’ve learned a good deal,” said Ned.

“ I ’m sure you have,” replied his father.

And Mystic and Shaun had had much the same kind of conversation that afternoon.

“ You don’t seem quite so frisky as you used,” Shaun had said.

“ I don’t feel the same,” answered Mystic. “ I feel older. It seems as if I ’d learned something that

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night. I hope I'm not so foolish as before."

"I know you're not," asserted Shaun.

But as for Ned and Mystic, no other master and dog, not even Shaun and his master, had such love for each other as did those two.



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